``USING CELL PHONES WHILE DRIVING

Cars surround us. They are a huge part of modern day life. Even if you don’t ride in them, they are always near by. Yet, we know that traveling in cars is not always safe. Swerving, speeding up, slowing down, and not paying attention while driving happen everyday. Most people would think this describes a drunk driver. Well, it also describes many people who use cell phones while driving. I believe drivers of motorized vehicles should be banned from using cell phones while driving.

Talking on cell phones is a bad example for future drivers. If children witness their parents talking on the phone and driving, not only are they in danger, they are also learning a bad habit. If we want to break this cycle we need to start now!

It is illogical to think of people talking on the phone during similarly dangerous activities. Can you imagine airline pilots, brain surgeons, or construction workers talking on the phone during their jobs. Driving a car requires our full attention as well!

I understand that many people use their cell phones for job-related activities. I also understand how busy people want to check in with their families for food or groceries. However, safety on the roads must take first priority. Our society is in such a rush, and believes that it is normal to use a phone while driving. Well, I remember being trained in driver’s education, and I don’t remember the instructor telling me to take out my cell phone and dial away. I do remember that we were taught to keep both hands on the wheel at all times, and to be focused on the road.

Clearly, the use of cell phones while driving should be banned. Many accidents occur due to inattentive drivers who are talking on cell phones, this is why it should be banned. Plus, it is a poor model for young, future drivers. Hopefully swerving, distracted driving will become a thing of the past. Let’s hang up the cell phones while driving.

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YEAR ROUND SCHOOL

Every day in the United States around 80 million students between the grades of kindergarten through twelve grade report to school. Every year, when the final bell rings in June, summer has finally come. Students don’t have to think about school for at least another 2 1/2 months. That is the way it should always be. Schools should continue using the traditional calendar and not a year-round schedule. There are numerous downsides to year-round schooling. It has no positive effects on education, it adds to costs, and it disrupts the long-awaited summer vacation.

Contrary to the well-accepted belief, year-round schooling has no constructive impact on education. Most year-round schedules use the 45-15 method: 45 days of school followed by 15 days off. Because of this, there are many first and last days of school. All those transitions disrupt the learning process. Also, there is no evidence of higher test scores. Due to that, many schools that change to year-round schedules end up switching back. For example, since 1980, 95 percent of schools that tried the year-round schedule changed back to a traditional calendar. It is obvious that changing to year-round schooling does not help students; therefore, why is the change necessary?

Like any other facility, keeping a school open requires a great deal of money. When a school changes to a year-round schedule, the costs skyrocket. Keeping school open in the middle of summer requires air conditioning, and that adds significantly to the school’s expenses. The usual utility bills grow because of the additional open-school time. Finally, teachers must be paid for all the weeks they are working. With all these factors, the cost of keeping schools open becomes immensely high. For example, a high school in Arizona had a cost increase of $157,000 when they switched to year-round schooling. Some schools may not be able to handle such increases, and other schools that can handle these expenses could be doing better things with the money. Is year-round school really where the money should go?

Proponents of year round school say that it will keep children out of trouble in the summertime, especially in urban areas. However, there is no date to prove this. In New York City, for example, December and January had the same amount of crime as July and August in past years.

An important part of a child’s life is summertime. With year-round schedules, students would hardly have any time to relax. During the 15-day breaks, they would be thinking about their quick return to school. It would also be difficult to coordinate family vacations with parents’ work schedules. Similarly, children would not be able to go to most summer camps. One expert, Dr. Peter Scales, says, “The biggest plus of camp is that camps help young people discover and explore their talents, interests, and values. Most schools don’t satisfy all these needs. Kids who have these kinds of [camp] experiences end up being healthier and have fewer problems.” Obviously, the summer is crucial to a child’s learning and development. Why should this invaluable part of a young person’s life be taken away?

It is evident that year-round schooling is not the best option for the school calendar. It is expensive, restricts opportunities, and doesn’t get test results. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the traditional school year. Why change something that works so well? The final bell rings. Let’s make sure this bell means that the “real” summer vacation has come.